SACRED CENTERS AND PRECONCEIVED JOURNEYS: INSIGHTS INTO THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN ORTHODOX KARELIA

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Pilgrimage has been a recent focus of interest among anthropologists and religious studies scholars, perhaps because of the insights it can provide into our understanding of the sacred, that controversial concept so vital to our definitions of religion (e.g. ELIADE 1959, OTTO 1969) and even cultural classification (ANTTONEN 1996). Pilgrimages are generally conceived of as journeys toward some sort of sacred, and this pilgrimage goal has been conceived of as a sacred center (MORINIS 1992).

My point of departure in this paper is that the *sacred* at any given pilgrimage site is context-specific and culture-bound. Sacred messages and meanings are not inherent in the pilgrimage site itself but are constructed and transmitted both by pilgrims and by the institutions controlling the site (see EADE and SALLNOW 1991). For this reason, in order to understand the pilgrims' experience of the sacred, we need to reconstruct the processes which make the pilgrimage goal sacred rather than seek universal definitions, as some scholars have done (TURNER 1978; GOTHÓNI 1993). In order to illustrate this point, the present paper compares 'folk' and 'institutional' descriptions of pilgrimage to Orthodox Karelian monasteries prior to World War II in order to explore the different ways in which the pilgrimage experience is moulded through socialization within specific communities.

The 'image' of the sacred center in pilgrims' perceptions is constructed in part through narratives which MORINIS (1992) calls the *informational field* of the sacred center, that is, "the web of tales, legends, history and miracle stories that spins out from the sacred center" (p. 22). As used in this study, the term *informational field* refers to any narrative discourse in either oral or written form[1] which attaches particular meanings to the pilgrimage site or its features. The informational field, with which the pilgrim is familiar *prior* to his/her journey, has the potential to affect how the pilgrim perceives and

[1] Although we lack contextual information about the process by which the stories, legends, etc. were transmitted and spread, it was probably similar to that observed by anthropologist Jill DUBISCH (1990) for a pilgrimage site in present-day Orthodox Greece:

"At the same time there is also a large oral tradition, consisting of pilgrims' own experiences and those relayed to them by word of mouth, a large part of which is not found in the literature of the church. The recounting of such stories (as well as tales of unusual vows or other dramatic incidents) is a common type of exchange among pilgrims, especially at major festival times when the crowds are large and people are more likely to fall into conversation with each other" (p. 126).

experiences the sacred site: it may have a strong influence on what the pilgrim will consider noteworthy, and what will be passed over unnoticed.

It is evident, for example, that the information field affected not only the perception but also *the behavior* of the Karelian pilgrims at the sacred center. When people moved about the monastery landscape, going from place to place, their activities were influenced by what they had heard concerning the histories and characteristics of various sites. This link between legend and action is exemplified in the following folk narrative:

> Near the city of Aunus there is the Stroitsa monastery: 'Jesus built the monastery' it is said. Nearby there are chapels built on the places where Jesus sat down to rest. When the narrator was young and left with a few others to Stroitsa monastery, their parents advised them: 'Don't sit to rest anywhere else on the trip—you should sit only on those 'stones where Jesus sat', which were in the vicinity of the crosses and chapels.[2]

The informational field of the sacred center serves as the framework which guides the pilgrimage experience. Bowman, observing the behavior of pilgrims from three different religious groups in Jerusalem, puts it another way:

> ...it is at the site whence pilgrims set out on their searches for the centre that pilgrims learn what they desire to find. At the centre where they go in expectation of fulfilling that desire *pilgrims experience little other than that which they already expect to encounter* (BOWMAN 1991: 121, emphasis mine).

Much of the informational field of a pilgrimage site takes the form of historical and religious legends and miracle tales, that is, collective narratives passed from generation to generation. Hence the importance of folklore for understanding pilgrimage: it forms the primary informational field for pilgrims in an oral or semi-oral culture, and it serves as the framework which affects the pilgrims' perception and experience of the pilgrimage site once they reach it.

The different informational fields compared here suggest that between 1900 and 1940, there was a marked difference in pilgrims' perceptions and experiences between the semi-literate Orthodox Karelian 'folk'[3] and more educated Orthodox Karelians (for example, priests, church officials, teachers, journalists and seminary students). The reason for these differences, I argue, is that ways of viewing and experiencing the sacred are learned within a community.[4]

For my analysis of the 'folk' informational field, I use as my source material 106 oral narratives and anecdotes collected from three areas: Viena Karelia, Aunus Karelia

[2] Tulemajärvi, Maija Juvas 240. 1938.

[3] According to KIRKKINEN et al. (1995: 266), slightly under half of the Orthodox population was non-literate towards the end of the 19th century.

[4] In comparing the descriptions given by members of these two different communities regarding pilgrimage, the experience of Elias Lönnrot at Valamo in 1828 is a useful control. Lönnrot arrived in Valamo with no access to an informational field whatsoever: as a Lutheran 'outsider', he knew neither the folk nor the institutional tales surrounding the pilgrimage site. He had to ask the few monks who spoke Finnish for the stories behind monastery objects which any pilgrim or monk would have been familiar with (as the monk himself pointed out). Lönnrot's recorded perceptions demonstrate how strongly the experience of the 'sacred center' is influenced by the informational field: Lönnrot found the monastery only superficially interesting, and within a short time was thoroughly bored and eager to leave.

and Ladoga Karelia[5]. The majority of the texts originate from four parishes in Ladoga Karelia (Salmi, Sortavala, Suistamo and Impilahti). All of the material deals with experiences and perceptions concerning pilgrimage prior to World War II. In the following table the texts are grouped according to the time period in which they were collected:

Period collected	Number of texts
1879–1899	8
1900–1929	4
1930–1940	70
1941–1960	11
1961 (Suistamo)	7
1992[6] (Aunus Karelia)	4

As is clear from the table, the majority of the texts were collected during the period 1930–1940. The most recent year of birth for an informant (excluding the 1992 interviewees, who were elderly) was 1907. There are several points which can be made concerning the informants: first, even in the decade 1930–1940 the folk informants already represented the older (and less literate and educated) generation of Orthodox Karelians. Of the 35 informants from that period whose age we know, the average age in 1935 was 58.5 years. Secondly, the informants do not appear to have had much contact with the institutional Orthodox church or the activities organized by it. For instance, 'folk' pilgrimages were organized by the villagers themselves rather than by the Church or some other institution, and the folk laity here do not appear to be the same lay members who corresponded by letter with monks and priests at Valamo, since there is no mention in any of the descriptions of any monk or priest by name, nor any hint that the monastery brethren were familiar or known to the folk pilgrims.

While eighteen texts deal with minor or unnamed sacred centers[7], 87 texts offer information concerning the four monasteries known throughout Orthodox Karelia: Valamo

[5] In 1897, 19 236 Karelians lived in Viena Karelia (accounting for approx. 49% of the total population) and 59 281 Karelians lived in Aunus Karelia (approx. 39% of the population) (KIRKKINEN et al. 1995: 272). Of the approximately 45 000 Orthodox Karelians in Finland in the 1890s, nearly one-third lived in Ladoga Karelia (KIRKKINEN et al 1995: 266).

[6] The fieldwork was carried out in the district of Priazha in the Karelian Republic in the summers of 1991, 1992 and the autumn of 1994. In 1991, the research team consisted of Irma-Riitta Järvinen and Senni Timonen from the Foklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society, Terhi Utriainen from the Academy of Finland and Nina Lavonen and Aleksandra Stepanova from the Karelian Academy of Sciences, Petrozavodsk. Seppo Seppälä documented the research on videotape. In 1992 the research team consisted of Irma-Riitta Järvinen, Nina Lavonen and Senni Timonen, and in 1994 it consisted of Irma-Riitta Järvinen, Nina Lavonen, Senni Timonen and Terhi Utriainen. The video and tape-recorded material from all field seasons is located in the Tape Recording Archive of the Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki.

[7] *Kelja monastery*: Impilahti. KRK 143. Juho Kuronen 1; Impilahti. KT 129. Juho Kuronen 45. 1936; *Antrei Antrayski's monastery*: Salmi. Ulla Manonen 1135. 1936 and 4716. 1937; *Orusjärvi monastery*: Salmi. M. Pelkonen 306. 1935–40; Salmi. Th. Schwindt VK 89: 56. 1879; Priazha. SKSÄ 121. 1992; *Säntämäki monastery*: Makslahti. Ulla Manonen 1139. 1936; *Heinisenmaa monastery*: Sortavala. Th. Schwindt VK 89: 55. 1879; *Vahvajärvi island*: Ruskeala. 1939. Anna Mustajärvi PK 29: 5302. – Anna Auvinen, born 1870; Ruskeala<Impilahti. 1939. Eino Toiviainen 550. – Juho Silvennoinen.

in Ladoga Karelia (43 texts); Solovetski in Archangel Karelia (16 texts)[8]; Konevitsa in Ladoga Karelia (11 texts), and The Holy Trinity of Svir (usually referred to as Stroitsa in the folklore) in Aunus Karelia (9 texts). Eight additional texts each contain information about two or more of these monasteries together.

For my discussion of the institutional informational field, I use as my source material 37 descriptions of pilgrimage and/or monasteries appearing between 1901 and 1939 in the Finnish Orthodox periodical *Aamun Koitto*. Thirty-three of the descriptions deal with pilgrimage to Valamo or experiences at this sacred center, one is a description of Konevitsa monastery, one describes both Valamo and Konevitsa, and two deal with impressions of Lintula convent. The authors of the descriptions were one of three types: 1) literate, educated pilgrims or visitors to the sacred center who described their own personal impressions; 2) members of a group[9] who had visited the monastery and who wrote on behalf of all participants; and 3) group trip organizers such as parish priests or teachers. These organizers sometimes included such information as their hopes and aims for the trip, evaluations as to its success and advice for future organizers. A significant number of the authors were church intellectuals and activists (RAIVO 1993: 116).

The folk narratives and *Aamun Koitto* descriptions exhibit some basic structural differences: the published descriptions are usually much longer and organize the pilgrimage events in chronological order or logically according to theme. The folk descriptions are shorter and more haphazard in their approach to the subject, often illuminating only one or several aspects of the pilgrimage experience rather than recounting the entire sequence of events.

CONCRETE VERSUS SPIRITUAL SACRED

Historians have noted that at various times and places Christian pilgrimage has been conceived of as a spiritual exercise, an imitation of Christ and his Saints (DAVIES 1988: 184–202), and some anthropologists have likewise tended to emphasize pilgrimage as a form of communication with the divine which allows the pilgrim to deepen his/her relation with the Supreme Being (PRESTON 1992: 45), or experience a spiritual transforma-

[8] Valamo and Solovetski in particular were major goals for pilgrimage – In the mid-19th century, Solovetski attracted between ten and fifteen thousand pilgrims each summer, while during the same period, Valamo drew eight thousand visitors annually (KOHONEN 1983: 36), five thousand alone on the feast day of its founders Sergei and Herman (DAVIES 1988: 136). In the 1930s, Valamo attracted approximately 3000 Orthodox pilgrims annually, while the number of Lutheran 'visitors' grew steadily from 6000 to 21 000 annually between the years 1930 and 1938 (KILPELÄINEN 1994: 389).

[9] Groups included, among others: members of the Ilomantsi Orthodox congregation, members of the Viipuri Orthodox congregation, members of the Salmi Orthodox parish congregation (180 not counting children), the Salmi church choir, the youth of the Suistamo Orthodox congregation, the youth of Korpiselkä Orthodox congregation, pupils of the Soanlahti primary school, pupils and teachers of the Suojärvi primary school, Sunday-school children of Sortavala, the pupils of the Christian primary school of Korpiselkä parish, participants of the Sortavala drawing course, students of the Orthodox Priest Seminary of Sortavala, the Orthodox students graduated from the Travelling Teachers' Preparatory Institute, the officers of the Finnish 2nd division, members of the Lotta-Svärd (Women's Auxiliary) Association, and members of the Ministry of Transport and the Committee on Appropriations.

tion (GOTHÓNI 1993: 108). Here I intend 'spiritual' to refer to an inner process of self-examination in a personal, intimate relationship with God. In the written descriptions of pilgrimage in *Aamun Koitto*, this sort of spirituality is a key theme: salvation, inner spiritual improvement, and the personal emotional experiences of the divine are all mentioned repeatedly in the written reports:

> Blessed are these moments! The people's group prayer amidst the relics of the saints moves powerfully, it fills the air, it melts even the hard heart, imprisons it, takes in into its sacred care, and elevates its life and world to the courts of Heaven, where everything low and unclean is shut out. ...its familiar and sublime melody speaks to the soul of a lost paradise, the finding of which is the goal of human life. Having found it, the happy person moves on to eternity. The monastery strives to help people in this search.[10]

Karelian folk narratives, however, do not address these motives. There is no mention of a longing for a closer union with God or individual spiritual growth, no self-reflection or even mention the afterlife.

We do not know whether folklore collectors ever asked folk informants about their intimate religious experiences, but it is clear that the informants viewed the collectors' questions and conversations as open-ended, given the great diversity of information they provided. People did not only tell collectors their folklore repertoires but also recounted their personal and idiosyncratic experiences during pilgrimage. In these accounts I do not find, even by reading between the lines, any definite indications of a 'spiritual' perception of the pilgrimage event and sacred center.

In so far as language is the only key to the experiences and perceptions of other persons and we are unable to speculate on what may or may not have been left unsaid by informants, I suggest that the Karelian folk narratives concerning monasteries and pilgrimage demonstrate the folk informants' interest in a *tangible* sacredness rather than a *mystical* one.

The act of pilgrimage was portrayed in concrete rather than spiritual terms, through descriptions of physical sensations rather than inner revelations. What was stressed were often mundane, touristic experiences of the trip such as meeting and talking to people, admiring the scenery, taking home souvenirs, arranging accommodation and of course, eating: how much food cost, if you had to bring your own, or as one narrator pointed out, the fact that at Valamo you could eat as much pea soup and drink as much tea as you wanted for the first three days.[11]

For the 'folk', sacred persons connected to the monasteries were 'holy' not because of their inner spirituality but because they were associated with supernatural control over the *natural* environment (they sailed across water on rocks, cured diseases,[12] fed multi-

[10] "At the Harbour of Peace", AK 1937, no. 34: 257–8. – M. Michailov.

[11] Vienan Karjala. Santtu Marttinen b) 18. 1926; Vieljärvi. Artturi Railonsala 3397. 1947; Salmi. M. Pelkonen 266. 1935–40; Priazha. SKSÄ 111. 1992.

[12] Salmi. 1935–40. M. Pelkonen 448. – Miikkul Izrikki, 69 years; Makslahti. 1936. Ulla Mannonen 1139. – Martta Kuha, 54 years; Salmi. 1934. Martti Haavio 1700. – Nastja Rantsi, 49 years.

tudes single-handedly,[13] or their buildings built themselves overnight[14]) or over the *supernatural*: they drove out demons,[15] for example. While guile and trickery were characteristics attributed to mythical sacred persons in several instances (young monk saves monastery from destruction by Swedish king,[16] Sergei and Herman gain control over island[17]), saintly qualities such as kindness, mercy, or charity were mentioned in only one narrative.[18]

People were not interested in the 'spiritual' activities of holy figures, they were interested in the evidence of their material existence and concrete acts. Pilgrimage sites were not places to *meet* the Supreme Being, they were places to *observe traces* of his former presence or the presence of the saints or founders, to honor and remember them. Much of the folk interest in pilgrimage in Karelia can thus be regarded as a kind of cult of traces. The acts of sacred persons were made concrete by the fact that they were imprinted onto the topography, 'set in stone' so to speak[19]:

> 'The old people also said that Jesus himself has visited Valamo'. There on the rocks it is possible to see the footprints of holy Jesus. They remained there as an eternal reminder of the time when Jesus visited Valamo. – Man, 78 years.[20]
>
> ...Those stones on which the founders of [Konevitsa] monastery sailed to the island can be seen in the monastery yard. They are about 1/2 meter long and on each of them there are two big hollows, just where a person's knees would fit. It seems that the men were on the stone for so long that their knees pressed into the stone. – Man, 51 years.[21]
>
> Oleksei Svirskii [Aleksanteri Syväriläinen] was a holy man. He ground flour with three handmills at once: with both hands and one foot. When he knelt on the rocks to pray, the imprints of his knees and hands remained there. He sailed on a stone over the lake and didn't drown. In his memory the monastery of Oleksei Svirskii on the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga was founded. – Woman, 47 years.[22]
>
> The story tells that the founders of Valamo monastery, Sergei and Herman, had sailed to Valamo archipelago on a rock and then founded the monastery there, and I have

[13] Impilahti. 1936. Sanni Tiensuu a) 102. – Maria Mäntylä b. 1882.

[14] Virtaranta (1964: 181–2); Porajärvi. 1936. L. Laiho 4022. – Maksima Jevlovna, b. 1863; Suistamo. 1939. J. Hautala 969. – Ivan Tajakka, 70 years; Salmi. 1935–40. M. Pelkonen 448. – Miikkul Izrikki, 69 years.

[15] Pyhäjärvi V. 1. Yrjö Kinnari KRK 126: 256. – Heikki Kuranen, 51 years; Sortavala. 1938. Juho Saikkonen 6; Sortavala. 1938. Juho Saikkonen KT 136: 94; Kangasniemi. 1894. Henrik Laitinen vol. 1: 122; Makslahti. 1936. Ulla Mannonen 1134. – Martta Kuha, 54 years; Salmi. 1938. Mikko Mikkonen KT 131: 190. – J. A. Mikkonen; Joensuu. 1938. Maria Pitkänen PK 31: 5643. – Heikki Koponen, b. 1892.

[16] Salmi. 1936. Pekka Pohjanvalo 17. – Jaakko Ahokas, 75 years.

[17] In this story the founders, Sergei and Herman, were given permission to take for themselves a piece of land on the island as big as a cowhide, which they cut up into little pieces and scattered over the whole island, thus gaining possession of it (Sortavala mlk. 1953. Sanakirjasäätiön välityksellä. Evald Hyppönen 1292; Impilahti > Sortavala. 1935–6. Toiviainen, Eino KRK 154: 11, Sortavala. 1935. Juho Hyvärinen KRK 141: 203).

[18] Salmi. M. Pelkonen 269. 1935–40.

[19] Sortavala. KT 137. Selma Saikkonen 120. 1936; Impilahti. Sanni Tiensuu a) 102. 1936; Priazha. SKSÄ 113. 1992.

[20] Suistamo. Siiri Oulasmaa a) 6209. 1961.

[21] Pyhäjärvi (Karelian Isthmus) V. 1. KRK. Yrjö Kinnari 256.

[22] Salmi. 1946. O. Harju 3868.

heard that the rock is somewhere preserved for the public to see, somewhere on an island called 'Pyhäsaari' at Valamo. – Woman, 65 years.[23]

...And when more people, forty men, came to [join the founder at the monastery], this holy hermit had fed them all by grounding the flour alone with a hand-held grinding stone, baking the bread alone, enough for all the people, and still having time to do other work. And there are still the imprints where his knees wore into the rock from praying. And he also had time to sleep, since there is the imprint of his head, shoulders, hips and heels, all worn into his stone bed. All of these could be seen at the hermit cottage. The narrator saw them with her own eyes when visiting, and had heard the story. – Woman, 54 years.[24]

TWO DIFFERENT VIEWS OF 'SIN'

Midway through the 1930s, a new theme began to appear in the *Aamun Koitto* pilgrimage descriptions: this was an emphasis on sin, on the smallness and unworthiness of humanity and a need for inner cleansing and forgiveness. This theme occurred frequently in the descriptions between 1935 and 1939:

One of the more beautiful parts of our trip was participating in the Holy Communion. We felt ourselves to be deeply sinful and helpless beings.[25]

All of us went to confess our sins.

...there was a desire to be released from the heavy weight of conscience.

...The more we familiarized ourselves with the sights of the monastery, the more powerfully we felt our own worthlessness and insignificance. On Saturday evening at Absolution we recognized our sinfulness and in our hearts regretted our deeds, and yesterday at Communion we felt we had received a great blessing and forgiveness.

...I heard a certain elderly woman give a summary of the trip: "Now it feels so good, when the burden of sin no longer weighs heavy."[26]

The visit to Gethsemane, where Jesus had prayed and had sweated drops of blood on behalf of us worthless sinners, in front of this picture each one of us must have felt themselves so small and sinful.[27]

I remain in the church, at the foot of Christ's holy cross even after the service is over, calling out from a deep maelstrom of sin: "Take unto yourself, Oh my Liberator, my repentance, allow me, a sinner, to clean your holy feet with my hot tears of repentance."[28]

[23] Salmi. KRK Pekka Pohjanvalo 143.
[24] Impilahti. Sanni Tiensuu a) 102. 1936. – Maria Mäntylä, b. 1882.
[25] "A Pilgrimage to Valamo", AK 1936. no. 37: 292. – participant.
[26] "Concerning the Church's Work Among the Youth', AK 1937, no. 36: 274–5.
[27] "On a Pilgrimage to Valamo", AK 1938, no. 40: 315. – Veera Patrikainen.
[28] "Travel Memoirs from the Lintula Nunnery", AK 1935, no. 11: 86. – Lucia Palin.

> Perhaps the memory most sacred and dear to all of the course participants was the common Absolution and taking part in the sacrament of Holy Communion. I will never forget the moment at which I was able to unburden all of my sins in front of God, to tell him of my troubles and repent. The beautiful advice of the confessor struck the sensitive chords of my soul so forcefully that tears of cleansing rolled freely down my cheeks. I felt that the hands of God came over me and blessed me, and that he had given peace to my stormy soul.[29]

In these 'institutional' descriptions, sin is a matter between the individual and God, representing a lack of spiritual depth or responsiveness toward God. The folk narratives also talk about sin, but here sin was conceived of as a wrongful act against other persons or a crime against the laws of the community, and it was a matter between the individual and society (although social norms were largely based on Christian concepts of morality). There is no evidence from the narratives that the concept of sin had any implications for the personal relationship between God and the individual:

> Our mother went to school at Orusjärvi monastery. Mama was a quick learner. She told us that it was the kind of place where the people walked on dry land to the monastery, but every now and then the water rose. There were two nice boys there fulfilling a vow because of their sins, one had gotten a girl pregnant but had not married her. Many people went there because of their own sins.[30]

In the folk narratives, the person is aware of his or her sinfulness *before* the pilgrimage visit, whereas the *Aamun Koitto* narratives suggest that it was only at the sacred center that pilgrims became fully aware of their 'burden of sin'. In the *Aamun Koitto* narratives, the concept of sin is God-centered: it is God who by his mercy sees fit to lift the burden of sin: there is no talk of *earning* this forgiveness. The emphasis in the written narratives is on confession, self-examination and 'feeling' sin-laden or relieved through repentance. In the folk narratives, on the other hand, the individual and God were often seen to be in a concrete *exchange relationship*, sin was a debt which could be paid by making a journey to the pilgrimage goal. The idea that sin could be 'paid off' was part of a larger folk worldview in which pilgrimage was seen not as a spiritual transformation but as a type of *transaction* with a specific aim or reward in mind. As with any transaction, there were costs which could be measured in terms of time, energy (traveling was usually on foot) and even money:

> Visiting Solovetski required a very large amount of money. – Woman, 69 years.[31]

> From here to the holy city [Solovetski] it's 36 leagues and it's so holy that people go to stay there for three years, on a vow.[32]

29 "Reminiscences from Sunday School Courses", AK 1936, no. 37: 290. – Olga Majuri.
30 Priazha. SKSÄ 121. 1992.
31 Salmi. M. Pelkonen 268. 1935–40.
32 Kiimasjärvi. R. Engelberg 1159.

This pilgrimage 'exchange' was usually framed in the form of a 'vow'.[33] Making this type of sacred vow or promise was known variously in Karelian dialects as *jeäkseijä, jeäksevüö, jeäksie*, among others.[34] The vow could entail a pilgrimage made before God, Jesus, the saint or monastery founder had fulfilled his[35] part of the bargain (for example in order to seek a cure) or *only after the cure had been granted*:[36]

> At thirty years of age my eyes became ill, I didn't see God's light, and in those times a neighbor woman also got a swelling disease. And so we decided to make a vow: we would go to Solovetski on foot, which is a distance of about 800 versts. We vowed to God that we would visit Solovetski on foot, if we recovered in a week's time. Towards the end of the week I began to see again—and my eyes were soon completely healthy, and the neighbor woman recovered as well. Then we left on our promised journey. At the beginning of the trip there weren't any others who were going there, but at the place called Poventsa there were already about 500 persons. Finally we arrived at Solovetski monastery, and it was grand—more beautiful and bigger than Valamo, we prayed there every day for two weeks.[37]

Children could also be 'promised' to a monastery if they recovered from misfortune, and a 'substitute' pilgrim could make the pilgrimage journey in order to seek a cure for someone else too ill to travel. In these cases it appears that the pilgrimage was perceived more as the fulfilment of a bargain than the deepening of the pilgrim's spirituality:

> When a child was promised to a monastery because a miracle cure had occurred in their case, this was called *jiäksentä*. From then on it was said of the child 'this child has been *jiäkseity* [promised in a religious vow]". Boy children were promised to Valamo, girl children to Lintula convent. – Woman, 68 years.[38]

> When a person was seriously ill and was not capable of going themselves to the monastery, to Valamo or Solovetski, then another went in their place to those sacred places to pray for a cure. That substitute traveller was *jiäkseity*. One had to make the entire trip to those sacred places by foot, all of the land stages by foot. One was allowed to make the water journeys, which had to be made when going to Valamo and Solovetski, by boat. There wasn't any other choice, since the monasteries could only be reached by water. – Woman.[39]

33 EADE and SALLNOW (1991) also draw attention to the 'exchange' ethic of pilgrimage: "In most cases, the dominant motive for going on a pilgrimage is to request some favor of God or the shrine divinity in return for simply having made the journey or for engaging in ancillary devotional exercises...Using the shrine divinity as a mediator, physical suffering and penance are exchanged for material and spiritual favors, contracts are forged with the saints, sin is amortized by means of a tariff of devotional or ascetic practices..." (p. 24).

34 Karjalan Kielen Sanakirja, p. 495.

35 The sacred persons associated with monasteries in Orthodox Karelia are in nearly all cases male.

36 See also: Uhtua. 1894. K. F. Karjalainen, Karelian Lexical Archives, The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland.

37 Impilahti. PK 5258. Mikko Jaakkola 1938

38 Suistamo. 1959. Siiri Oulasmaa E 241: 132. – Anna Votkin (formerly Kalevainen), 68 years.

39 Suistamo. 1959. Siiri Oulasmaa E 246: 213–214, told by Parakeeva Makkonen.

SACRED PERSON AND SACRED PLACE

In the *Aamun Koitto* pilgrimage descriptions the most frequently-appearing theme was *sacredness of place* expressed in romantic terms: specifically, the beauty and tranquility of Valamo's natural surroundings (see also RAIVO 1994). In the written descriptions from *Aamun Koitto*, the sacred place does not need a sacred person in order to justify its sacredness. The qualities it embodies are sufficient for its status as a sacred center—it becomes personified, the protagonist of the monastery:

> The sea, the vast sea, is before my eyes. The evening sun is setting. It brings its golden glitter to the glassy surface of the water. At this moment I am on a rocky spit of land in the Ladoga archipelago. A sweet peace settles in my soul. I have broken away from the bustle and dust of the city and am now happy as I gaze upon God's magnificent nature. It is quiet.[40]

> It was a beautiful autumn day. The sun sent its gold to the peaceful surface of Ladoga's waters, along which, quietly but surely, sailed a small boat... Thousands of visitors hasten to gaze upon Lake Ladoga. They want to enjoy the stillness of this island, in the bosom of nature. In the evenings they want to hear the twittering of the birds and the ringing of the monastery bells.
>
> ...Beautiful and charming were the surroundings...and what of Lake Ladoga itself, how did it appear? Majestic, it stood. It neither surged nor thundered but calmly stretched its protective wings as far as the eye could see. Peacefully it received us and promised to take us safely to the harbor of peace.[41]

> I stand and gaze at this ideal Finnish landscape. My eyes are caressed and my heart delighted by the view. The bay is glassy calm. Only here and there do the fishes dance and shatter the calm of the water's surface. In looking at this beauty, one is put under its spell, from which it is difficult to break free. It is still and calm...
>
> ...—My friend! When you visit Valamo with its apple and cherry trees, its lilacs in full bloom, then go out when the sun is setting, stand and listen, and from the nearby woods you will hear the nightingale sing. It is already worth the trouble of coming to Valamo, if you have not heard this rare bird in your own home district.[42]

> The magnificent nature draws people to God. The vast sea, sometimes glassy calm, at other times ill-tempered and stormy, the rugged shore cliffs and ancient woods speak to them of God's great and good works.[43]

> The cloudless sky, like a giant vault of blue, arches over us. The ship's mast, gilded by the sun, sparkles in the air. The restful waters reflect islands, villages and forests from their endlessly clear surface, forming an enchanting picture the likes of which could not be created by any mortal artist.[44]

[40] "Summer Reminiscences of Valamo", AK 1919, no. 15: 127. – A – a.

[41] "A Trip to Valamo monastery", AK 1923, no. 21: 164, . – Student at Sortavala Orthodox College for Priests.

[42] "The Nightingales of Valamo", AK 1925 no. 14: 130.

[43] "Valamo, the Pearl of the Ladoga", AK 1927, no. 13, 14: 165. – E. J. Ellilä, Kansan Kuvalehti.

[44] "At the Harbour of Peace", AK 1937, no. 34: 257. – M. Michailov.

> We gazed upon and admired the landscapes, each more beautiful than the last, which opened up before our eyes. We knew ourselves to be in the most beautiful chamber in the nature of our motherland, at the centuries-old pilgrimage center of the Karelians. Apple and cherry trees bloomed in well-protected and well cared-for orchards...Lilacs and roses spread their lovely fragrance and colorful glory, the birds sang, and almost nowhere else is their safety so guaranteed as in the forests of Valamo. Water birds seemed tame because they let people come so close.
>
> ...Lake Ladoga was at rest, a peaceful, almost glittering expanse of beauty. Everywhere one looked, one could see the most beautiful ideal Finnish landscape sparkling in the sunlight.
>
> "Child of Finland, do not barter away your lovely land..."
>
> —These lines by Topelius came to my mind as if of their own will.[45]

Similar descriptions can be found for Konevitsa monastery:

> We drank water from sacred springs, gazed at the beautiful, well cared-for woods and fields of grain, and admired the lovely sandy beaches and other scenery. The order, cleanliness and peacefulness of everything we saw made a singularly good impression on us trip participants and will remain unforgotten in our memories.[46]

In the 'folk' informational field on the other hand, *sacred persons* form the most important thematic element of the oral tales, while the sacred place is sacred only through the person of the founder, saint or God whose presence has in some way transformed it.

Sacred persons in the folk narratives tend to be mythologized and associated with supernatural power: in the numerous legends in which monastery founders are said to have originally sailed to the monasteries on flat rocks or millstones, a conceptual link is made between the sacred person and the mythical/supernatural: giants and witches also sailed on flat rocks in Finnish tales (HAAVIO 1936). As mentioned earlier, sacred persons were also associated with supernatural control over both the *natural* and *supernatural* environments.

But despite this mythologization, there existed close, personal relations between pilgrims and sacred monastery persons just as there did between Orthodox Karelians and saints in everyday life. In Orthodox Karelian folk religion the saint was concrete (usually equated with his or her icon), human and intimately involved with the lives of his/her devotees. Saints were seen to have their own miraculous powers which they could use for good or bad. Folk legends were told about the lives and deeds of the saints in ways that made the saint more human, capable of making mistakes, and in the case of St. Nikolaos (Miikkula), the most popular Karelian saint, the legends described him as caring and concerned, a merciful saint whose help was always near.[47] This intimate relationship

[45] "The Valamo Trip made by the Pupils of Soanlahti Primary School 18–19.6. 1925", AK 1925, no. 14: 129.

[46] "The Salmi Church Choir's Trip to the Monasteries of Konevitsa and Valamo", AK 1939, no. 29: 225. – D. K.

[47] Salmi. 1935–40. M. Pelkonen 410. – Johor Lammas the elder; Suistamo. 1936. Martta Kähmi 75; Aunus. 1938. Niilo Leppänen 301; Porajärvi. 1943. Helmi Helminen 1898. – Ivan Hermonen, 75 years; Sammatus. 1943. Helmi Helminen 1818. – Paraskovja Kurshijev, born 1886.

meant that people could even make jokes about the saint: in one village in Salmi, people said playfully that Miikkula had stolen flour from the mill, since it appeared from his icon that he had flour on his beard.[48]

The characteristics ascribed to Miikkula in Orthodox Karelia—mercy, leniency, immediate assistance in times of trouble—resemble those often associated with the Virgin Mary/Mother of God in Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox cultures. In 1988, anthropologist Jill Dubisch heard the following legend in present-day Greece while researching pilgrimage on the Cycladic island of Tinos, home of a miracle-working icon of the Mother of God:

> In the summer of 1988... I heard the following story while I was standing with a group of pilgrims just outside the church. A child who had been 'vowed' to the Madonna had fallen overboard from a ship on its way to Tinos. The ship had not turned around but had sailed on. However, the Madonna was watching over the child, and it was picked up by another ship which was passing by and brought to the church. When the grieving parents arrived, they found the child waiting for them beside the icon (DUBISCH 1990: 126).

In a Karelian version of this Orthodox legend-type, it is Miikkula who saves a child dedicated to Valamo monastery: during the boat journey to Valamo with its mother, the child falls overboard during a storm. Upon reaching the monastery, the mother goes directly to Miikkula's icon, crying and praying, at which point the child, alive and well, miraculously appears sitting on the altar.[49]

In Orthodox Karelia people maintained close, reciprocal relationships with various saints. The obligations of the human devotees included lighting candles in front of the saints' icons, bringing offerings or gifts of food, alcoholic drink, wool, linen or butter, sacrificing animals in the saints' honor, or leaving the 'last' portion of some grain crop unharvested or unthreshed as an offering to the saint.[50] Obligations of the saint, in turn, ranged from granting a large catch of fish or luck in hunting, helping the grain or other crops to grow, protecting cattle from predators, giving protection and aid against disease, etc.

Not fulfilling one's part of the exchange bargain could result in punishment by the saint: if one did not honor the patron saint of the local chapel in the proper way, the saint could punish that person with an accident or illness. Sometimes a sorcerer could tell the victim if the misfortune was caused by the saint[51], in other cases the disease's origin was revealed in a dream. It was then necessary to go immediately to the shrine, light candles and bring gifts, money, and/or food in order to appease the saint.

[48] Salmi. 1935–40. M. Pelkonen 414. – Anni Spiridonantytär Lammas, formerly Herranen; Salmi. 1935–40. M. Pelkonen 413. – Johro Lammas the elder.

[49] Aunus. 1938. N. Leppänen 301.

[50] Vuokkiniemi. 1901. O. Marttini III. 608, Karelian Lexical Archives, The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland; Suistamo. 1930. R. E. Nirvi, Karelian Lexical Archives, The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland.

[51] Suojärvi. 1941. Viktor Hankka 88; Oulu. 1930. Samuli Paulaharju 13732. Anni Lehtonen, 50 years; Säämäjärvi. 1928–9. E. V. Ahtia, Karelian Lexical Archives, The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland.

According to one informant, if someone in Orthodox Karelia prayed to Saint Miikkula before leaving on a journey and promised to give money to the church if the journey were successful, but then failed to give the promised amount, it was believed that Saint Miikkula was likely to become angry and take his payment anyway: the person's cow or horse might die, or the person might sicken.[52]

As mentioned earlier, vows or promises involving pilgrimage and monasteries were also part of this exchange relationship. Pilgrimage journeys were made in connection with a miraculous healing or some other divine favor. In one brief description given in Viena Karelia, a man prayed to the "god" Izotei Savatei (Savvati Solokkalainen, founder of Solovetski monastery) and promised that if his wife gave birth to a son, he would make the journey to Solovetski.[53]

Therefore, even though sacred centers are always technically *places*, their sacredness in the folk narratives depended on their connection to a sacred person or persons. In many cases pilgrimages represented a continuation of the reciprocal relationships that people carried out with sacred persons in everyday life.

The mythologized *sacred person* so important in the folk narratives is absent in the *Aamun Koitto* descriptions of pilgrimage and Valamo monastery. There are no stories of saints or holy men who left their traces at the monastery, no tales of miracles performed by these sacred persons. There are no references to close or reciprocal relations with any sacred persons. Occasionally anecdotal references are made to the recent acts of historical figures, but these stories differ from those recounted in the folk narratives. *Thus even when tales of important persons were used in the Aamun Koitto discourse, the authors drew on a different set of cultural lore than did the 'folk'.* A popular tale in the written descriptions concerns the meeting between Russian emperor Alexander I and the hermit Nikolai, of which I have found three nearly identical versions presented by authors in *Aamun Koitto*, but which was not mentioned by a single folk informant:

> This insignificant hut is nonetheless important for the fact that the [Russian] emperor Alexander I paid a visit there on his trip to Valamo in August of 1819. The delighted hermit offered his noble guest the best he had, namely turnips from his own herb garden. The emperor took one of them. When a knife began to be sought in order to clean off the skin of the turnip. the emperor said: "I am a soldier and I eat like a soldier", and began to peel the turnip with his teeth.[54]

> The great lord, emperor Alexander I, came to greet the hermit Nikolai. The old man received him hospitably and offered the emperor a turnip which he had grown. He started to look for a knife to give to his guest to peel and cut the turnip, but his guest said, "I am a soldier" and bit off a piece of the turnip.[55]

> In 1819 the emperor Alexander I came here to visit the old man. The ruler had conversed for a long time with the hermit concerning the great questions of their faith. The

[52] Salmi. 1937. Ulla Mannonen 4982. – Martta Kuha 54 years.

[53] Tulemajärvi. 1942. Helmi Helminen. – Solomanida Petrov, born 1862, Karelian Lexical Archives, The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland.

[54] "The Hermit's Hut", AK 1901, no. 6: 51.

[55] "The Trip to Valamo made by the Students of the Sortavala Drawing Course", AK 1924, no. 16: 126.

> old monk had offered the emperor a turnip from his own garden, and when he did not happen to have a knife handy, the emperor peeled the turnip with his teeth, saying, "I'm a soldier and eat like a soldier too".[56]

Other stories of historical and contemporary figures connected to the monastery include the following:

> In the same graveyard we come to the grave of the Swedish king [Magnus], whose rectangular headstone tells a piece of this king's life history: King Magnus was saved from a shipwreck by floating on a piece of the ship to Valamo, and there he converted to the Orthodox faith and died a monk.[57]

> When he had to leave, the Archbishop [of Sweden] suggested to the hermit [Father Ephrem] that it might be good to offer the Lord a prayer together. What followed was a unique event: the hermit of Valamo dressed in his *skeema* clothing and the head of the Swedish Lutheran church knelt devoutly side by side in front of the King's door and began to pray in a low voice to their common Father in Heaven (...) It was a wonderful moment (...) At the end of the 16th century the chief of the Swedish troops of war, Pontus de la Gardie, completely destroyed Valamo monastery, and stained the rocks of the monastery island with the blood of hermits in killing nearly 80 monks. Now a hermit of Valamo and the supreme shepherd of the Swedish people knelt together in front of the greatness of God...Such is the power of love.[58]

If we compare these anecdotes, it is clear that they all have something important in common: they tell of historical figures of authority who, upon visiting Valamo, relinquish some of the social distance between their own rank and that of the monks. It is implicit in the tales that this new intimacy between authority figure and monks arises out of the leader's respect for the way of life represented by monks. We may view these stories as a form of discourse propagated by the monks at Valamo, but their adoption by the *Aamun Koitto* authors suggests that this theme, in which the sacred center commands interest and respect from other political and religious powers, was useful to the Karelian intellectuals and activists of the Finnish Orthodox Church. In the difficult and uncertain times experienced by Karelian Orthodoxy following Finland's independence in 1917–1918, legends recounting meetings between the monastery and other political and religious powers created a 'tradition' which could be held up as a model for contemporary encounters.

The persons who populate the descriptions in *Aamun Koitto* to the greatest extent, however, are the monks, priests and Igumens with whom the pilgrims came into contact. What they said and did, how they acted towards the pilgrims, is a topic *which is not dealt with at all in the folk narratives* but which is stressed in the published descriptions. Accordingly, the emphasis moves away from the *mythic* sacred person toward the

[56] "Valamo, Pearl of the Ladoga", AK 1927, no. 13–14: 164. – E. J. Ellilä, Kansan Kuvalehti.

[57] "The Valamo Trip made by the Pupils of Soanlahti Primary School 18–19.6. 1925", AK 1925, no. 14: 129.

[58] "The Swedish Archbishop and Natan Söderblom at Valamo" AK 1927, no. 20: 250–252. – S. Solntsev.

romanticized sacred place and the *role of actual persons*, reconstructing the sacred to be relevant for contemporary issues, especially those of ethnic, linguistic, geographic and religious *identity*, which are also found in abundance in the *Aamun Koitto* descriptions but which are never mentioned in the folk narratives concerning pilgrimage and monasteries (see below).

CULTURAL IDEALS DISPLAYED AT THE PILGRIMAGE SITE

MORINIS (1992) has suggested that the 'sacred' at the pilgrimage center "arises from the collective investment in the *ideals* that are enshrined [in it]" (p. 6, emphasis mine). Sacred centers are 'cultural capitals' which develop and project

> an image that is a magnification of some accepted ideals in the culture. They represent a higher or purer or more ideal version of what the potential pilgrim already values and seeks by dint of membership in a culture (p. 18).

Orthodox pilgrims were offered a showcase where cultural (but not necessarily spiritual) ideals were 'displayed' both visually and through the informational field, where pilgrims could select from a number of ideals in constructing a coherent view of their own cultural continuity and values.

For the folk pilgrim, the sacred center showcased an array of different ideals which could even be contradictory. These ideals had a single common denominator: they were expressed in a highly concrete manner, stressing visual and tactile details. One apparently conflicting set of ideals was the simultaneous emphasis on ascetic poverty and conspicuous wealth. Asceticism as an ideal is clear from the tales of 'holy hermits' (see also LAITILA 1995):

> ...They went to the island [Valamo] and there they made themselves a cave in the earth. There they prayed to the Creator. They didn't have any food there, no water, not even fire. They were just there in the cave in the earth. Nobody there came to visit them, nor did anyone know that there was somebody there. They dedicated themselves to God's will there and the Holy Spirit went to give them food. That's how they survived. And they didn't want anything more than water and bread, and some salt...[59]

> ...In the beginning their food was berries from the forest, their bed the bare earth and their pillow a stone. Finally some fishermen found them and brought them some seeds to plant grain. Sergei and Herman began to cultivate a little land. They ground the grain with handmills. The Russian Karelian refugee said that these stories really happened.[60]

> Antrei Antrayski [Andrian Ontrusovalainen] was a hermit, a holy man, who lived in the woods, tortured himself with fasting and dedicated his life to worshipping God...[61]

[59] Aunus > Salmi. J. Hautala and L. Simonsuuri SKSÄ A 133. 1938.
[60] Suojärvi. J. Koivunen KT 128: 8. 1936.
[61] Salmi. Ulla Manonen 1135. 1936.

This ideal is also clear from the tale told by a Valamo monk to Elias Lönnrot on his visit to Valamo in 1828. The story concerns a visiting monarch: "He was at the monastery several days and 'partook of the monastery's poverty and liturgy'" (LÖNNROT 1952 (1828): 131).

But as Lönnrot also reports, awe-inspiring riches were part of the sacred center as well. The treasures of Valamo, for example, included delicately crafted candelabras and censers, gold Eucharistic vessels, gilded silver hand crosses and silver candle stands. Church interiors were lavishly decorated with splendid altars, iconostases and doors, and the magnificent gilded sarcophagus of Sergei and Herman in the lower church (see also KOHONEN 1983):

> The afternoon mass had now begun, and I went to the church. My awe was great when I saw all of the beauty which opened up in front of me. The walls were completely covered with pictures, and these had gold- and silver-plated frames. In the same way the columns and ceiling arches were gilded and silvered. Here and there jewels sparkled in gold and silver settings. Wherever the eye roamed, it saw only gold and silver as well as the aforementioned paintings which depicted events from the Old and New Testaments and displayed the likenesses of famous saints (LÖNNROT 1952 (1828): 132–33).

The mystique of monastery wealth can be seen in a number of 'treasure' tales concerning the hidden riches of various monasteries:

> One old man named Hilkku had told the narrator (...) that he had live the major part of his life at Valamo Monastery, and that he had heard from the old monks at the monastery that in former times the treasures of Valamo had been hidden inside a monk's cell, which was walled-up and made unnoticeable from the outside, and there the treasures are still today, nor do the present monks know in which place or in which building this treasure room is located. – Man, 75 years.[62]

> In ancient times at the beginning of Christianity there was a monastery on this hill. This monastery is called 'Keljan monastery', from which has come the name Kelivaara. This monastery was built by two saints, but it is no longer known who they were or when they founded it... During peace times the monastery grew larger and richer and there were great treasures there: icons of God and the holy hermits, church bells of great value, candlesticks and chalices for communion... [At the arrival of the enemy soldiers] the monks hurriedly put all of the riches of the monastery into a large sack and dug a great hole in the earth, burying the riches in the hole...After having covered up the hole the head monk read an incantation, but it is not known what kind, and then 'set' it with a talisman, with which they could retrieve the treasure from the ground in times of peace...[63]

How these two values of asceticism and ostentation were reconciled is not explained in the folklore, and it is unlikely that the pilgrims perceived a need to do so. People came to see and touch the *extremes* of cultural values made tangible: all the wondrous things or

[62] Valamo. 1936. Pekka Pohjanvalo 133. – Jaakko Ahokas, 75 years.

[63] Impilahti. 1935. KRK 143. Juho Kuronen 1. Six additional folk narratives also involve hidden or lost monastery treasure.

ways of life which one could not see in everyday life and which, by their very wondrousness or moral purity, proved that the sacred center was more special, more powerful, more perfect.

What this suggests is that the ideals invested in the sacred center were both concrete and multiple. The sacred center acted as an empty ritual space which could accommodate many ideals: it was, as EADE and SALLNOW have argued, "a realm of competing discourses" (1992: 15).

Other informants expressed yet another set of cultural ideals enshrined at the sacred center, this time concerning moral behavior, which they expressed through the concept of *access* to the sacred center: those who had committed serious sins could not enter the sphere of the pilgrimage goal. Since access was almost always described in terms of crossing water, some folk narratives contained the motif of a floating rock or boat which began to sink if carrying a 'sinful' passenger. By examining these narratives it is possible to determine what constituted the moral ideal (and its lack) as represented in the informational fields:

> Anyone who might have stolen a plow or harrow from another person couldn't go to the monastery. In the middle was a body of water called the White Pond. The boat wouldn't take the person, just went in cricles or stopped, finally it was necessary to return to the shore. Each person openly told the priest what his or her sins were. Then somebody confessed to the priest: 'I have taken another's plow secretly', or any man who had been with a strange woman [not his wife], these were not allowed back on the boat, they had to leave, they didn't reach the monastery. – Woman, 69 years.[64]

> ...Thieves, arsonists and murderers were not carried by the Solovetski boat. The boat would begin to sink. Then whoever had done something wrong was made to swear the truth, people were taken off the boat one by one, and one by one they were put back on. Whoever had done something wrong had to confess it, they had to say it, and then they were not allowed to board the boat. The boat could continue the trip when the sinner had left. There was a woman named Hersoi from Pielisjärvi. When she was a girl she had given birth to a child and had killed it. Then, when she went to Solovetski it was suddenly discovered. The boat wouldn't take her to Solovetski, it began to sink. She had to confess then and there, and she was turned away, and came home. She didn't get to visit Solovetski, she had to go home.
>
> There were a lot of people there. From the villages, you see, people came in big groups. It was a long, long time ago. Only our parents remembered it. – Woman. [65]

The sins mentioned by the narrator clearly reflect biblical teachings: Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, etc. This suggests that the ideals embodied in the sacred centers were first and foremost Christian ones. Conversely, a causal connection was often made between the 'holiness' of the monastery founder who sailed miraculously to the monastery on a flat rock and his ability to reach the sacred site: "[the founder was] a holy man since the rock carried him"; "They were said to be so holy that

[64] Salmi. M. Pelkonen 268. 1935–40.
[65] Salmi. M. Pelkonen 366. 1935–40.

they sailed on a flat rock to the island..."; "[They] were so holy that they were even able to row on a flat rock".[66] But in some narratives even the monastery founders fall short of the ideals, putting them at risk of not reaching the sacred center:

> In former times the old people said that Sroizza, Valmoija and Solohkoi were brothers. They rowed to Solovetski on a stone raft...Sroizza didn't want to live on an island. He said that it's not good to live here, and left...When he left on the stone raft it began to sink so that the water was up to his knees, because he had made a great sin by not wanting to live there. He came back and founded Stroitsa monastery... – Woman, heard from her parents.[67]

These legends focus on 'sin' as the cause of the boat or rock refusing to carry its passengers. Internal motives are not delved into and the focus is on outward obedience. The boat story is strongly reminiscent of belief legends in the Finnish-Karelian culture area. Like the belief legends, the boat story circulated as a tale 'type': what was important was not the precise circumstances or identities of those involved, but the 'image' it created of the sacred center. If we view belief legends, which dealt with all types of 'sinful' acts, as part of the background culture 'surrounding' the sacred centers, we can see how the second 'boat' narrative given above was able to make the sacred center 'distinct': most belief legends concerned with infanticide generally warned against only the spiritual or 'other-worldly' consequences of this crime (see JAUHIAINEN 1989). In the pilgrimage narratives, however, the sin was exposed in *this* world and the guilty turned away before she reached the monastery. This meant that the monastery was on a higher plane of moral gatekeeping than was the surrounding culture: unconfessed murderers (as well as thieves and adulterers) could not be readily distinguished from their neighbors in the course of everyday village life—but *upon approaching the sacred space* of the monastery they were automatically subjected to a re-examination which separated the guilty from the innocent, thus demanding a greater accountability with regard to Christian cultural ideals. A tale from Valamo refers to the same 'weeding out' process and difficulty of entry, again connected to the Christian moral ideal:

> The first priests at Valamo were very godly... People visited [the last archbishop] in order to be blessed, except that not everyone was allowed in to see him. He looked at the visitors and didn't let everyone in. He knew about each visitor, what kind of person he or she was. To the poor he gave money, saying, "Go, may you be blessed by Christ!" – Even the poor he allowed in to see him, if only the heart was clean. – Woman, 69 years.[68]

This idea of moral inspection represented in the folk narratives was instrumental in creating the image of the monastery as a sacred center with higher cultural standards, embodying 'perfection' as opposed to the 'imperfection' of more mundane spaces.

The *Aamun Koitto* descriptions also reveal collective ideals enshrined at Valamo monastery, but these ideals differ markedly from those dealt with in the oral folk narra-

[66] Suistamo. Frans Kärki 2415. 1945.; Kuhmalahti [Häme Province]. KRK Kustaa Lahtinen No. 27. 1935; Impilahti. KRK. Eino Toiviainen 234.

[67] Suistamo. M. Kähmi 16. 1936.

[68] Salmi. M. Pelkonen 269. 1935–40.

tives. There are no stories of hidden treasure, no themes of moral gatekeeping in the written texts. The recurrent ideal expressed in the *Aamun Koitto* texts is the preservation and continuation of *Karelian ethnic, religious and linguistic identity.* This ideal of a unified identity was never mentioned in the folk narratives concerning monasteries and pilgrimage.

Behind the *Aamun Koitto* discourse on *identity* lay the reform work undertaken within the Orthodox Church after Finland became independent from Russia in 1917. A second crucial factor was the Finnish government's interest in 'nationalizing' the Orthodox Karelian people. Such nationalism was geared toward encouraging Karelians, who spoke a dialect of Finnish but who had for centuries been under Russian religious, cultural and linguistic influence, to identify with Finland and Finns (see SETÄLÄ 1966).

Prior to World War I, when Finland was a Grand Duchy of Russia, the struggle between Finnish nationalists and Russians for the 'soul' of the Orthodox Karelian people took place both in Finnish and Russian Karelia and made full propaganda use of concepts concerning religion and nationality. Nationalistic Finns and Karelians (to which several assistant editors of *Aamun Koitto* belonged) held that the only difference between Orthodox Karelians and other (Lutheran) Karelians was mere religion, while the Russians and Russian-minded Karelians stressed that the common bond of Orthodoxy, the true faith, was a more powerful mark of identity than language or 'nationality', and that the Lutheran church of the 'alien West' was the true enemy of Karelia (KIRKKINEN et al. 1995: 276).

After the Russian Revolution and the fall of the Orthodox Church in Russia, Ladoga Karelia (and with it, Valamo monastery) remained on the Finnish side of the now closed border. The interests of the Finnish Orthodox Church reformers in this region lay with the Finnish state, and their solution to the identity dilemma was to foster a Karelian cultural identification among Orthodox parishoners which would be clearly separate from Russianness, in part through group pilgrimages to Valamo (see KILPELÄINEN 1995: 115). This cultural identification stressed not only the Orthodox religion but also the *Finnish language* as an element of 'Karelianness'.

In order to facilitate cultural identification, it was first necessary to promote a clear image of the Karelian people as a separate and unified ethnic group. This was done in part through *Aamun Koitto* descriptions of group pilgrimages to Valamo:

> The Igumen went on to say that Valamo monastery has from the time of its founding been the faithful homefire of *Greater-Karelia*, from which the *Karelian people* have sought spiritual warmth and comfort. It is nonetheless grievous that the *Karelian tribe* is now scattered, and that part of it has ended up outside *its natural motherland*, where all human rights, ideals and religion are trampled upon. The Igumen nonetheless trusted that the day would still dawn, *when even this part of the tribe would reunite with its natural motherland.*[69]

> The Karelian holds firm to the beliefs of his forefathers and its traditional customs.[70]

[69] "The Visit Made to Valamo Monastery by the Officers of the 2nd Division", AK 1933, no. 22: 182, emphasis mine.

[70] "A Certain Trip to Valamo", AK 1938, no. 27: 209. – A. T.

> Already for many years now it has been hoped that for their final festive occasion at the end of their [Sunday school work] the young people could take a trip to Valamo monastery, the Jerusalem of the *Karelian tribe...*[71]

> At the grave of the Karelian apostles Sergei and Herman, the rising Karelian tribe prayed with lit candles.[72]

> The whole day the monastery was full of people. It reminded one greatly of former times. It is said that more than a thousand persons visited the monastery that day, and at their head *the representatives of our Karelian tribe.*[73]

> ...and pastor Ryttyläinen explained the significance of Valamo for the rising generation of the *Karelian tribe...*[74]

In this construction, the Orthodox religion was a key part of Karelian ethnic identification, having been passed down through generations:

> All of the participants were very satisfied and hoped that these sorts of trips could be organized more often so that surely then *our religion, inherited from our fathers*, would be better and more purely preserved within us.[75]

Valamo monastery was emphasized as the unifying element of the Karelian people not only across geographic distance but across historical time as well, constructing an uninterrupted history to match the notion of a united *Karelian people*:

> From these very places the message of the Gospels was brought to the wilds of Karelia in ancient times. From here, light was distributed to our forefathers and foremothers who lived in darkness. And they themselves visited here, drawing life-force and religious strength from this place. They came here as pilgrims, just as we do now. At no time did they leave here without having received comfort.[76]

> ...priest-monk Isaakij...urged those present to lift up their prayers to God in that holy place, *in which their fathers and forefathers had, kneeling, done the same...*[77]

> The Igumen answered my speech by saying that he was happy that the light kindled by the first apostles of Karelia, Sergei and Herman, was still burning brightly, since this youth group had also kindled its light.[78]

[71] "The Youth of the Korpiselkä Congregation at Valamo", AK 1933, no. 35: 280. – A. Ryttyläinen, emphasis mine.

[72] "Concerning the Church's Work Among the Youth", AK 1934 no. 36: 215, emphasis mine.

[73] "The Festivities at Valamo Monastery July 11–12", AK 1920, no. 15: 119–120.

[74] "Concerning the Church's Work Among the Youth", AK 1937, no. 36: 274. – Simo Hiekkaranta. emphasis mine.

[75] "The Salmi Church Choir's Trip to the Monasteries of Konevitsa and Valamo", AK 1939, no. 29: 226. – D. K. emphasis mine.

[76] "Pilgrimage to Valamo", AK 1936, no. 37: 292. – participant, emphasis mine.

[77] "A Certain Trip to Valamo", AK 1938, no. 27: 209. – A. T., emphasis mine.

[78] "The Youth of the Korpiselkä Congregation at Valamo", AK 1933, no. 35: 281. – A. Ryttyläinen, emphasis mine.

> The work and spirit of [Sergei and Herman] live immortal in the Orthodox faith in Karelia, where our forefathers have wandered and which they have left us as a sacred heritage.[79]

In the *Aamun Koitto* descriptions, the Karelian Orthodox people were encouraged to identify with the monastery. Valamo was described as the sacred center of Karelian Orthodox *religion* by such terms as "that cradle-place of our holy faith"[80], "the cradle of Orthodoxy"[81], "cradle of our Orthodox faith"[82] "the cradle of our established faith"[83], "the cradle of Orthodoxy in Karelia"[84], "The Karelian tribe's celebrated cradle of religion"[85], "the most sacred place of Karelian faith"[86], "the holy place of the Orthodox Karelians"[87] and the "Orthodox Karelian spiritual center and mother":[88]

> ...[Valamo monastery] has for centuries been to both Karelians and the Orthodox people not only the headquarters of piety but [the place] from which people return spiritually healthier, renewed, and strengthened in their faith.[89]

> On that occasion all Orthodox Karelians were aware of what a sacred place for them is old Valamo, the cradle of our holy faith within the Karelian tribe.[90]

> [Igumen Hariton:] Our monastery is the cradle and center of Finnish Orthodoxy, so it is our and your common responsibility to preserve it.[91]

> Hopefully Orthodox Karelia will not desert the cradle of our church, but rather look after its preservation.[92]

Constructing Valamo as the sanctuary of Karelian *linguistic* identity, on the other hand, was more problematic. After Valamo became part of Finland in 1918, there was a desire within the Karelian Orthodox parishes, (in conjunction with the Finnish government's interest in nationalizing the Orthodox Karelians) to link Karelian ethnic and religious identity to the Finnish language rather than the Russian (or Church Slavonic) languages, and to make Valamo the center of that linguistic identity. This desire encountered two problems: the first was that in the minds of the Karelian Orthodox people, Finnish language priests and services had long been associated with Lutheranism (see HEIKKINEN 1989: 148). Prior to 1917, the Russian government in Orthodox Karelia had tried to draw a parallel between the Orthodox religion and Russian nationality as part of its equaliza-

79 "To Valamo's Pilgrims", AK 1933, no. 26: 209. – M. Michailov.
80 "A Visit to Valamo", AK 1903, no. 7: 60.
81 "Reminiscences from Sunday School Courses", AK 1934, no. 30: 177, – Participant.
82 "Reminiscences from Sunday School Courses", AK 1936, no. 37: 290. – Olga Majuri.
83 "Reminiscences from Sunday School Courses", AK 1936, no. 37: 291. – Olga Majuri.
84 "A Certain Trip to Valamo", AK 1938. no. 27: 209. – A. T.
85 "Notable Youth Expeditions from Karelian Congregations to Valamo", AK 1939, no. 31: 243.
86 "A Pilgrimage to Valamo", AK 1936, no. 37: 291. – Participant.
87 "At the Harbour of Peace", AK 1937, no. 34: 257. – M. Michailov
88 "On Ss. Sergei and Herman's Day", AK 1932, no. 37: 293. – Aari Surakka.
89 "At the Harbour of Peace", AK 1937, no. 34: 257. – M. Michailov.
90 "The Festivities at Valamo Monastery July 11–12", AK 1920, no. 15: 119–120.
91 "At the Harbour of Peace", AK 1937, no. 34: 257. – M. Michailov.
92 "A Certain Trip to Valamo", AK 1938, no. 27: 209. – A. T.

tion and consolidation campaign in Finland, and this viewpoint was part of the education received in Russian schools in border districts (SETÄLÄ 1966:11). As a result, there seems to have been a strong resistance to any change from Church Slavonic to Finnish language services in general, as one parish priest described in 1907:

> The people blindly believe that if church services were to begin to be held in Finnish, then they would lose their own faith and would become Finns, that is, Lutherans. In the eyes of these simple people, religion and ethnicity are apparently tangled up together.[93]

The second problem was that Valamo itself was primarily Russian-speaking: only a few monks spoke Finnish, and most services were conducted in Church Slavonic up until World War II (see KILPELÄINEN 1994: 175–177, 181–182).

The *Aamun Koitto* discourse on the subject suggests an attempt to influence both of these issues by 1) making it clear that Finnish was the language with which Orthodox Karelians should identify, 2) praising the use of Finnish at Valamo and 3) urging its more frequent use:

> ...[w]e returned to the lower church, where we conducted a moment of prayer in the Finnish language for the monastery founders, so that they would pray on our behalf. *It warmed the heart to hear the prayer moment conducted there in that beloved language, where moments before Church Slavonic had resounded.*[94]

> [Igumen Hariton]: All of you...today get to hear the church service and choir singing in your own *beloved language.*[95]

> ...Nor does the significance of Valamo monastery diminish in the light of the fact that its present population is Russian by birth. Every monk who was at all able, participated enthusiastically in the Finnish language service.[96]

> The church of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, which is located at the head of the so-called holy gate of Valamo monastery, has been used earlier on special occasions to conduct services in Finnish. Last summer and the summer before, liturgical services [in Finnish] were conducted there regularly, on Sunday as well as on important holidays, beginning at 7:00 in the morning. This initiative has fallen upon good soil in this holy place, since recent years have seen an increase in the number of pilgrims from the Karelian Orthodox population as well as from elsewhere in Finland who do not understand the Slavic language services in the monastery's main church and thus cannot completely satisfy their sacred devotion there.
>
> ...May the Lord bless this holy initiative in Valamo's vineyard and may it attract his honor and those involved in the salvation of human souls, so that this initiative would succeed and grow from a tiny mustard seed into a great tree of the Kingdom of Heaven, under which and on whose branches weary souls could receive rest, warmth, light, comfort and refreshment on their life's journey.[97]

[93] "Letters from Karelia: In the midst of the folk of Orthodox Border Karelia", AK 1907, no. 2: 18.
[94] "A Trip to Valamo Monastery", AK 1923, no. 21: 164, emphasis mine.
[95] "At the Harbour of Peace", AK 1937, no. 34: 257. – M. Michailov, emphasis mine.
[96] "The Festivities at Valamo Monastery July 11–12", AK 1920, no. 15: 119–120.
[97] "The Church of Peter and Paul at Valamo", AK 1927, no. 24: 304. – P. I.

> Finnish church services are a rarity at Valamo, and the monks know less Finnish than Valamo's priests, nor do they have any sympathy for such an interest... The heartfelt wish of many a monastery visitor would come true if Valamo monastery would realize this on their own and organize Finnish language church services.[98]

THE PILGRIMAGE EXPERIENCE AS A RESULT OF ENCULTURATION IN A SPECIFIC COMMUNITY

Based on the observations above, I suggest that from the folk point of view, pilgrimage in traditional Orthodox Karelia was not a "shift from worldliness towards spirituality", in GOTHÓNI's terms (1993: 113). In most cases pilgrims were neither departing from a state of 'worldliness' (in the sense of a Western rational or secular worldview) nor were they entering a state or awareness of spirituality as an inner, emotional or mystical process. Rather, the Orthodox Karelian folk pilgrim started from, and remained within a worldview which included continual contact with the sacred, a category which included religious figures, the dead, dynamistic forces, forest and water spirits and other supernatural beings (see STARK et al. 1996; STARK-AROLA 1998). On the basis of folk beliefs recorded at the turn of the century, VIRTANEN (1968: 47) tells us that Christianity had only a superficial influence on the mythico-magical worldview of Archangel Karelians, and magic incantations and descriptions collected well into the 1960s and deposited in the Finnish Literature Society Folklore Archives show that throughout Orthodox Karelia, beliefs and practices associated with sorcery, the evil eye and animism existed until at least the 1940s in many places. This was a serious problem in the eyes of the church officialdom. In 1907 a priest from Salmi wrote in *Aamun Koitto*:

> In this parish, members of the Orthodox church live in the lowest kind of ignorance and magic-belief...In a word, the people outwardly perform all that the church requires, but without knowing their real significance, not knowing, for example, such a thing as the meaning of making the sign of the cross, not to mention other outward customs.
>
> ...One encounters crudity and superstition wherever one looks.[99]

What the priest refers to as 'superstition' was really the extension of the syncretic worldview to frame the new information and phenomena encountered at Orthodox monasteries. The monks and priests appearing in legends about monasteries used 'magic' to conceal their treasure[100] and had the power to foresee the future.[101] The animistic/dynamistic concept of *haldiekas* (= 1. containing a *haltia* or place spirit, or 2. powerful, unable to be harmed by magic) was also utilized as a familiar model for conceptualizing miracles or other inexplicable occurrences at Valamo monastery:

[98] "The Valamo Trip made by the Pupils of Soanlahti Primary School 18–19.6. 1925", AK 1925, no. 14: 129.

[99] "Letters from Karelia", AK 1907, no. 2: 17.

[100] Impilahti. KT 129. Juho Kuronen 45. 1936.

[101] Salmi. M. Pelkonen 269. 1935–40.

> At Valamo, in the church of Nikolai, there was a *haldiekas* chapel. There in the chapel was an ancient coffin which was able to speak. When you hit the coffin with a birch branch, it said: 'Nikolai, Nikolai, Nikolai'. A lot of people have heard that coffin speak. – Man, 78 years.[102]

> [Sergei and Herman] did not have a boat with which to row across the sea to Valamo, where they went to found the monastery. They sat on a rock on the shore and the rock carried them across the sea to Valamo. There those great holy hermits founded the monastery...Both holy men died at Valamo. There they have their own chapel. "The chapel is *haldiekas*". Miraculous cures happen there as well. – Man, 78 years.[103]

> At Valamo there is the grave of Ss. Sergei and Herman. 'It is a *haldiekas* chapel'. They have the best *haltija* because they are real holy hermits. They can be compared to Christ. People's sicknesses are cured in the chapel when they pray there in true faith. – Man, 64 years.[104]

The fact that the oral and written narratives differ in their perceptions of pilgrimage and the sacred center calls into question the "naturalness" of *both* reactions. Just as the perceptions of the folk laity were shaped within their communities by a centuries-old dialectic process between folk and institutional religion, so too I argue that the *Aamun Koitto* pilgrimage discourse concerning spirituality and sin was a *constructed* discourse fostered by the Church officialdom and 'taught' to parish members. In other words, official Church teachings brought about a learned response, a certain type of encounter with the sacred, and limited this encounter to a particular range of perceptions and experiences. I suggest that if the pilgrims who are described in *Aamun Koitto* had mystic or spiritual experiences or dwelt on their sinfulness, it is in large part because church workers were actively trying to create this response within them, and perhaps were even teaching pilgrims that this was what they should expect and hope for from the visit to Valamo.

We know, for example, that in the 1920s and 1930s the Church was involved in a campaign to socialize Karelian youth through group pilgrimages in order to bring pilgrimage behavior and experience in line with institutional teachings and interests, to 'tighten the ranks" of Karelian Orthodoxy. An 'official' view of what pilgrimage should be was increasingly stressed by church workers. Hannu KILPELÄINEN (1995) has characterized the motives of parish priests who organized group pilgrimages for children and students in the 1930s as 'the possibility or wish to influence the process of *socialization* and *enculturation*" (p. 115, emphasis in original). Letters written by these priests to Valamo monastery reveal that they conceived of these visits to the monastery as ways of strengthening the bond between individual pilgrims and the Orthodox religion.

This socialization was seen to be necessary due to the threats facing Karelian Orthodoxy from secularization, the growing activities of protestant sects, the decline in Orthodox consciousness, and the moral corruption seen to be part of the spirit of the times, which some priests viewed as the result of atheist movements linked to Marxism

[102] Suistamo. Siiri Oulasmaa a) 6211. 1961.
[103] Suistamo. Siiri Oulasmaa a) 6216. 1961.
[104] Suistamo. Siiri Oulasmaa a) 6214. 1961.

(KILPELÄINEN 1994: 179). The threat from the protestant sects appears to have been most widespread at the beginning of the 1930s, in the period of deepest economic depression in Karelia (KILPELÄINEN 1994: 177). Concerns over these threats can also be seen from the *Aamun Koitto* descriptions:

> May the remembrance of Saints Sergei and Herman ignite in us an even greater love for the Orthodox faith, and an even greater loyalty to that faith, which was preached in ancient times by the holy educators of Karelia, Sergei and Herman. And this summons calls out to us particularly forcefully and bindingly now, as sectarians travel throughout Karelia in droves, preaching beside the Bible to us of things thought up by men, and of teachings artificially squeezed out of the Bible.[105]

Such evidence for the conscious socialization of Karelian pilgrims supports the suggestion that the concepts of salvation, sin, inner spirituality and emotionality found in the *Aamun Koitto* descriptions were to some extent pre-programmed responses to such enculturation. This enculturation, in turn, arose from a growing Karelian ethnic awareness and the socio-political relationship between the Orthodox Church, Finland and Russia during the period between the wars. The concept of Valamo *as a place* to be cherished (and defended), a stronghold of Karelian identity located on the Finnish-Russian border; images of past encounters with high authorities in which such authorities held Valamo in high respect; and images of its current inhabitants as familiar, avowed 'friends' of Finland were vital for the political and educational agendas of the reformers and intellectuals of the Karelian Orthodox church (SETÄLÄ 1966; KILPELÄINEN 1994, 1995). These images then became part of the informational field which shaped the perceptions and experiences of *Aamun Koitto* readers and future pilgrims.

In conclusion, I argue that the different informational fields surrounding Karelian monasteries point to the *culturally-constructed nature* of pilgrim experience and perception at the sacred center. Because of this, we need to focus on the specific socio-cultural conditions which give rise to informational fields, which in turn play a part in shaping pilgrim experience. The search for a universal definition of pilgrimage or universal elements within *pilgrimage* thus may not be a useful point of departure for understanding pilgrimage and the nature of the sacred center. The assumption that the journeys we call pilgrimage in different cultures and at different points in history are in essence all the same thing takes for granted that which should be examined, and reduces the ability of the researcher to uncover why the pilgrimage experience is different in different contexts.

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[105] "To Valamo's Pilgrims", AK 1933, no. 26: 209. – M. Michailov.

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